

"All that is necessary
for the triumph of
evil is that good
men do nothing . . ."
— EDMUND BURKE.



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"And the Light Became so Bright: The Influence of C.H. Douglas on the Writings of Ezra Pound" By M. Oliver Heydorn

*This the text of a paper to be presented at the 31st Ezra Pound International Conference in
Dorf Tirol, Merano, Italy in July 2025.*

Today, I am honoured to introduce you all to a manuscript entitled: *And the Light Became so Bright: The Influence of C.H. Douglas on the Writings of Ezra Pound*. The primary author of this study is the late **Lorne A. Reznowski**. He was a Canadian scholar whose life was deeply intertwined with the intellectual and political currents of the 20th century. Together with Lorne's son, Theodore Reznowski, I have been editing this manuscript for the last two years in preparation for its eventual release. We are happy to announce that, after much intense work, this manuscript is on the verge of being published with the help of Arouca Press and should be available very shortly.

For whatever reason, the deep connection between Ezra Pound's poetry and prose and the philosophical, political, financial, and economic ideas of the British engineer and monetary reformer, Major Clifford Hugh Douglas (1879-1952), does not appear to be something that has received a great deal of attention. Douglas' analysis of what ails society and what should be done to reform the social order became known as Social Credit. This is not to be confused with the much more recent CCP social credit, which, if anything, is a vision for society that is the very opposite of what Douglas intended. It was in reference to Douglas Social Credit that Pound had written the following:

***and the light became so bright and so blindin' in this layer of paradise
that the mind of man was bewildered. (Canto XXXVIII).***

Hence, the purpose of the manuscript, its *raison d'être*, is to explore the nature and the extent of C.H. Douglas' influence on Ezra Pound and his writings. In doing so, it seeks to address a significant gap in the scholarly discourse—namely, the widespread neglect of Social Credit's literary impact.

By focusing the reader's attention on the intersection of Pound's poetic vision on the one hand and Douglas' economic doctrines on the other, the study also offers us a novel interpretive framework for understanding the whole of Pound's poetry, prose, and political engagement—but more on this a little later on.

I: The Author – Lorne A. Reznowski

Lorne Reznowski was born on January 5th, 1929 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, into a family of Eastern European Catholic immigrants. Raised in Winnipeg's North End—a vibrant, multicultural but impoverished area—he absorbed not only the diversity of languages and customs but also witnessed the struggles of working-class life. These experiences deeply shaped his worldview. Even as a child, he was confronted with the political debates and conflicts of the time. He heard stories of Communism, attended Social Credit rallies, and even delivered speeches on economic justice at the tender age of 12.

His intellectual journey was equally diverse. He studied English literature and theology in a variety of institutions ranging from St Paul's College in Winnipeg, to Loyola College in Montréal, to the University of Ottawa, and to the Catholic University of America. A committed Catholic and a passionate Distributist, he found common cause with thinkers like G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. These were thinkers who, like Douglas, had sought a third option beyond conventional capitalism and socialism. Reznowski's academic career included the teaching of English literature at the University of Ottawa and later at the University of Manitoba's St. Paul's College, and his love for literature encompassed Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dickens.

It was during his graduate studies in Ottawa that he first approached Ezra Pound, in a letter dated April 6, 1965, proposing a thesis on the influence of Douglas's economic ideas on Pound's writings.

I'll just share a bit from that letter:

Notice the address:

Mr. Ezra Pound
c/o Princess de Rachewiltz
Brunnenburg, Tirol
Merano, Italy

Dear Mr. Pound,

I have been a student of the philosophy of Douglas Social Credit since my early boyhood. At present I am engaged in graduate work in English literature at the University of Ottawa (Canada).

In reading a biography on you, I was struck by the great influence Major Douglas had upon you. You mention Social Credit in so many letters to your literary friends and there are allusions to Social Credit in your Cantos.

It seems to me that many doctoral theses in English literature have been written on the influence of Fabian Socialism on Shaw, Wells, etc. However, there seems to be a conspiracy of silence with regard to the influence of Social Credit on modern literature.

I know that you brought Social Credit to the attention of T.S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, Marianne Moore, Archibald Macleish [sic] etc.

I know that Eliot refers to Social Credit in his introduction to the *Rock*.¹

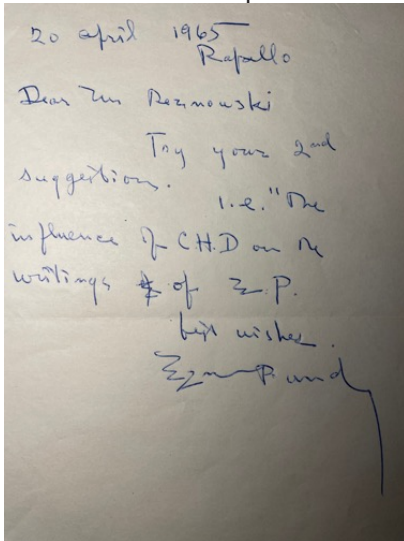
I would like to write my doctoral thesis on “The Influence of C.H. Douglas on the Cantos of Ezra Pound”. Do you think that Douglas was a strong enough influence in your career to justify a thesis such as this?

If you feel this is too narrow, I could perhaps write on the “influence of C.H. Douglas on the writings of Ezra Pound”, or the “Influence of C.H. Douglas on Modern Literature”.

I would appreciate your advice on this matter.

To his great surprise, Pound—by then an elderly and reclusive figure living in Italy—wrote back in the affirmative, suggesting that he tackle the influence of Social Credit across the entirety of his writings.

And here is Ezra's response:



20 April 1965
Raphael
Dear Mr. Reznowski
Try your last
suggestions. i.e. "The
influence of C.H.D on the
writings of E.P.
but wishes
Ezra Pound

For Reznowski, this was both an honour and a grave responsibility. He applied himself assiduously to the task and began an intensive scholarly investigation. His interactions with Ezra Pound's family, including correspondence with Dorothy Pound and a visit to Mary de Rachewiltz in 1975, underscored his commitment to this research.

But Reznowski was more than a scholar. He was also a politician, a teacher, and a family man. He would eventually serve as leader of the federal Canadian Social Credit Party in the 1970s, though his tenure was short-lived due to political and personal exhaustion. Nonetheless, he remained steadfast in his commitment to the ideals of economic justice.

Until his death in 2011 from cancer, Reznowski remained preoccupied by one unfinished task—his manuscript. It had been derailed in the late 1960s by a combination of academic politics, the accusation of plagiarism (involving poor formatting and citation issues rather than deceptive intent), and the hurly-burly of everyday life. Yet the core of the work—its vision, its originality, its depth—remained intact ... it was just awaiting the day of its final completion.

II. The History of the Manuscript

Reznowski had completed an initial draft of the thesis by 1967. His thesis committee at the University of Ottawa initially approved his work, but on the eve of his defence, a new chair of the English department, **Dr. Richard Pollard**, intervened. Pollard alleged that there was faulty documentation and even plagiarism—largely concerning improperly formatted quotations. Despite acknowledging some technical lapses, Reznowski vehemently denied that there was any intentional misconduct.

The situation was complicated by academic politics and, as subsequent research by Lorne's son Theodore revealed, perhaps even academic fraud. Pollard himself may never have earned a legitimate doctorate, despite claiming one from the University of Paris or Strasbourg. He never published the doctoral thesis he boasted of, and institutional searches have turned up no record of it.

In any case, the academic dispute had some devastating consequences. Reznowski's thesis was blocked and he was denied the opportunity to transfer to another university. His career was redirected, and he focused instead on teaching at St. Paul's College at the University of Manitoba. Yet he never stopped working on this project, returning to it periodically through the decades, collecting materials, refining arguments, and responding to new Pound scholarship.

In 2011, while Reznowski Sr. was gravely ill, his son Ted began organizing the materials for eventual publication. In 2023 Ted approached myself, as a contemporary scholar in the field of Douglas Social Credit, to aid him with the editing and completion of the manuscript. I contributed a new chapter, chapter 1, an appendix, and refined various explanations of Douglas's ideas. Ted has also added a number of sections to the body of the text itself in order to bring it up-to-date with more contemporary Pound scholarship.

Thus, the final work includes not only Reznowski's original insights but also additional research. The overall aim has been to clarify Pound's dense allusions and to tie them more directly to Douglas's thought.

III. The Content of the Manuscript

The core thesis of the manuscript is both clear and bold: **no single thinker influenced Ezra Pound more deeply than C.H. Douglas.**

Douglas, a Scottish engineer and economist, developed Social Credit theory in the early 20th century. He argued that modern economies produce more in goods and services (as these are measured in prices) than they can simultaneously distribute in incomes, leading to chronic underlying shortfalls in consumer purchasing power.

While the present financial system compensates for this gap by relying on steady increases in government, business, and consumer debt, Douglas advocated for monetary reform. The price-income gap could and should be filled via the issuance of an appropriately calculated volume of debt-free credit instead. To this end, Douglas proposed two mechanisms: a **National Dividend** that would be distributed periodically to all citizens and a **Just Price** that would reflect the real, rather than financial, costs of production.

Pound first encountered Douglas through the editor of *The New Age* A.R. Orage in 1918, and it marked him profoundly. The young poet, already disillusioned by the devastation of World War I, found in Douglas a systemic explanation for war, poverty, and artistic decline. Pound came to believe that **usury**—the extractive model of a self-serving financial system—was at the root of civilization's decay and that Douglas most clearly provided the economic framework for understanding the mechanics of it.

Pound's embrace of Douglasite economics is evident in his prose, especially *ABC of Economics* and *What is Money For?*, where he directly cites Douglas's writings. But it is in *The Cantos* that Douglas's influence is transformed into something epic. Reznowski maps this influence across the three major phases of *The Cantos*:

In The Early Cantos (I–LI), Pound juxtaposes mythical and historical fragments, from Odysseus to Sigismundo Malatesta, as he begins his economic critique.

It is in Canto 38 where we read what is perhaps the most clear and complete reference to Douglas Social Credit, the reference which inspired the title of the manuscript. I'd like to read it now in full:

A factory

**has also another aspect, which we call the financial aspect
it gives people the power to buy (wages, dividends
which are power to buy) but it is also the cause of prices
or values, financial, I mean financial values**

It pays workers, and pays for material.

**What it pays in wages and dividends
stays fluid, as power to buy, and this power is less,
per forza, damn blast your intellex, is less
than the total payments made by the factory**

(as wages, dividends AND payments for raw material
bank charges, etcetera)
and all, that is the whole, that is the total
of these is added into the total of prices
caused by that factory, any damn factory
and there is and must be therefore a clog
and the power to purchase can never
(under the present system) catch up with
prices at large,
and the light became so bright and so blindin'
in this layer of paradise
that the mind of man was bewildered.
(Canto XXXVIII)

This is a poetic rendition of Douglas' famous A+B theorem.

The Middle Cantos (LII–LXXXIV) include the Chinese and Adams Cantos, where Pound turns to Confucian philosophy, Chinese history, and American founding documents. Douglasite themes emerge strongly here, particularly in the form of fiscal justice, the distributive role of money, and the resistance to central banking.

The Later Cantos (LXXXV–CIX) includes Rock Drill and Thrones. In them, Pound attempts to articulate a vision of a just society built on truth, beauty, and equity. Douglas's vision of economic democracy—especially the idea that monetary systems should serve, not enslave, humanity—is foundational here.

In the course of the manuscript, Reznowski also explores how Douglas's ideas shaped Pound's views on art, history, war, education, and governance. For Pound, economics was not a mere academic discipline; it was a moral and artistic battleground. A corrupt financial system, he believed, led to cultural decay, while an honest and just one could usher in a new Renaissance.

Crucially, Reznowski's manuscript challenges the often-dismissive view of Pound's economics as "crankish" or incoherent. Instead, he argues that if we take Douglas seriously—and understand his critique of capitalism and socialism alike—then Pound's poetic project reveals itself as the expression of a unified philosophical vision. What critics may view as Pound's eccentricities are, through the lens of Douglas Social Credit, understood as being part of a coherent worldview.

Conclusion

And the Light Became so Bright ends with a hopeful, if sobering, message: Douglas' proposals remain largely unknown and untried, even though many of our modern crises—economic inequality, political polarization, and spiritual malaise—echo ever more intensely the very problems that Douglas and Pound had identified so many decades ago. In other words, Douglas' ideas and Pound's exposition of them are more relevant now than when they were first published.

Thank you for your attention.